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# Wisconsin Forestry Notes

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February 2003

Wisconsin DNR - Division of Forestry

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## DeLong named new Division leader

Paul DeLong has been named administrator of the DNR's Forestry Division and Chief State Forester effective February 2. The Division of Forestry is responsible for the administration, development and implementation of a balanced management and protection program for the state's 16 million acres of forestland and the millions of urban trees that are so critical to our quality of life. DeLong plans to continue building on the past successes of the forestry program. Among the priorities for his position, DeLong will emphasize enhancing external partnerships including counties, fire departments, landowner organizations, cooperating foresters, conservation groups and others interested in the forest resource and DNR forestry programs. Outreach will also be among his top priorities - both to forest landowners not currently practicing sustainable forestry and to reconnect Wisconsin citizens with the forest resource and its myriad values. DeLong will also focus on growing challenges such as invasive exotic species, development in the wildland / urban interface and forest fragmentation.

*"The protection and sustainable management of our forest resource has been the foundation of the Wisconsin forestry program for nearly 100 years," DeLong says, "and I intend to continue that vision."*

**For more background information about DeLong, go to:**

<http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/caer/ce/news/rbnews/2003/012303co.htm>

## Fire season continues through winter

A lack of snow cover and low relative humidities statewide have caused a significant increase in the number of wildfires this winter. In January alone, Wisconsin DNR wildland firefighters responded to nearly 100 wildfires that burned almost 300 acres. DNR's normal firefighting techniques don't work in cold weather. Since they can't create fire breaks in frozen ground and pumps often freeze making it difficult to use water, DNR resorts to non-traditional techniques that are slower and less efficient, increasing the risk of a small winter fire becoming large. The most common causes of wildfires this winter have been either debris burning or improper ash disposal. Debris burning alone accounts for nearly one-third of Wisconsin wildfires even though DNR encourages alternatives such as recycling, composting or creating wildlife habitat with brush piles in the woods.

**For more information, contact Blair Anderson at 608-264-6032**

*"Wisconsin wildfires typically occur in March, April and May when vegetation is dry and the snow cover has disappeared," says Blair Anderson, DNR's Forest Fire Management Chief. "Our dry winter doesn't bode well for the spring fire season ahead."*

## Public & MFL land: Little effect on property taxes

While public land offers aesthetic and recreational benefits, it is commonly believed that these benefits come at the price of higher property taxes. However, a June 2000 report from the Wisconsin Department of Revenue says that the presence of public land (as well as private forest tax law lands) in a community has little effect on property taxes in that community. In Wisconsin, changes in state aid payments and special payments for public land usually neutralize the loss in tax base due to public lands. Therefore, the report concludes, public land acquisition decisions should focus on the effect the purchase will have on the environment and local economy and not on how such land will affect property taxes. A complete copy of the report is at <http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/org/land/forestry/publications/PLPT.pdf>.

*"The presence of public land, including private forest tax law lands, has little effect on property taxes in that community," according to a DOR report.*

*Master plans establish goals and objectives for the property and identify how the property will be managed and developed. The plans are designed to clearly communicate to the public how the property will look and what benefits it will provide.*

*The gypsy moth, accidentally introduced into the U.S. in 1869 to Massachusetts, is one of the most notorious pests of hardwood trees in the Eastern U.S. The first outbreak occurred in 1889 and since that time this pest has steadily spread north, south and west. It became established in Wisconsin in 1989 and has been marching westward across the state. Wisconsin DNR coordinates a suppression program designed to prevent defoliation by outbreaks of gypsy moth while the WI Dept of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection works to slow the spread of gypsy moth in western and central Wisconsin.*

## State Forest master plans move ahead

A new Master Plan for the Brule River State Forest was approved by the Natural Resources Board in December 2002 and is currently being implemented. However, a petition for judicial review has been filed by groups opposed to the decision of the Natural Resources Board.

The "preferred alternative" for the Northern Highland-American Legion State Forest will be distributed for public review in March 2003. The preferred alternative provides general management direction and precedes the more detailed Draft Master Plan.

The Division of Forestry has also begun preplanning for the Black River State Forest and the new Peshtigo River State Forest.

**For more information, go to:**

[http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/master\\_planning/](http://www.dnr.state.wi.us/master_planning/)

## 2003 gypsy moth suppression update

DNR officials are hoping for a wet, cool spring that can cause mortality in young gypsy moth caterpillars since the winter has not been cold enough to impact this imported pest. Gypsy moth egg mortality begins when temperatures stay below -20 F for a few days. Since landowners can't depend on the weather to prevent defoliation by gypsy moths, they've applied to the DNR suppression program to reduce outbreaks on their property. In Spring 2003, 28,901 acres are proposed for treatments of Btk, a naturally occurring bacterial insecticide. Marinette and other counties in northeast Wisconsin account for a large percentage of these acres. Egg mass surveys in that area indicate that we can expect defoliation over most of Marinette county and the northern half of Oconto county though the severity will vary between sites. Additional defoliation may occur in central and southcentral Wisconsin.

**For more information, go to:**

<http://www1.uwex.edu/ces/gypsymoth/dnrprog.cfm>

## Gypsy moth coordinator approved

The Joint Finance Committee of the Wisconsin Legislature approved a request for a gypsy moth program coordinator in DNR's West Central Region. This position will provide direction and assistance for counties in the central part of Wisconsin that are facing outbreaks and defoliation from the gypsy moth for the first time this year. The coordinator will also provide training and guidance for forest managers and landowners in central and southwest Wisconsin in how best to reduce damage to their trees from gypsy moth outbreaks.

**For more information, contact Darrell Zastrow at 608-266-0290**

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"Wisconsin Forestry Notes" is a monthly electronic publication highlighting programs and activities of the Wisconsin DNR - Division of Forestry, Box 7921, Madison, Wisconsin 53707  
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